



Wynona Lipman  
*Centennial Celebration*

The Wynona Lipman Project Presents  
**STRONGER THAN STEEL**  
*The Wynona Lipman Story*

A Celebration of New Jersey's First  
African American Woman State Senator

**Saturday, November 18, 2023**

**Nico Kitchen + Bar**

@New Jersey Performing Arts Center  
One Center Street | Newark, NJ 07102



# Wynona Lipman Centennial Celebration

## The Wynona Lipman Project

The Wynona Lipman Project is a four-part Centennial Celebration of Senator Lipman, a project of Blue Butterfly Arts & Media. Senator Lipman would have turned 100 on November 17, 2023. The Wynona Lipman Project encompasses the community forum that was held on April 22, 2023 at The Newark Public Library. The community forum provided an opportunity for friends, colleagues, politicians, social service providers and the general public to discuss and learn about the late Senator Lipman. Newark Municipal Council President LaMonica McIver moderated a discussion among panelists Senators Nia H. Gill, Loretta Weinberg, Senator/Mayor Sharpe James III and lobbyist and co-founder of Wynona's House Jeannine LaRue. Also in attendance were members of the Newark Municipal Council – South Ward Councilman Patrick O. Council, West Ward Councilman Dupre Kelly and Councilwoman-at-large Louise Scott-Rountree. The event was co-sponsored by The Newark Public Library and Wynona's House (an Essex County Child Advocacy Center).

The Wynona Lipman Project includes *Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story* – the exhibition – at the New Jersey Historical Society opening on Saturday, November 18, 2023 and the talk and book signing by Washington, DC Bureau Chief for *The Griot* and author April D. Ryan. Finally, *Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story* – the documentary – is the centerpiece of the series and is slated to premiere in March 2024 (in the Chase Room) at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.



### Senator Wynona Lipman

Senator Evelyn Wynona Moore Lipman, familiarly known as Senator Wynona Lipman (1923-1999), served 27 years in the State Senate and worked tirelessly to improve the health and well-being of women, children, LGBTQ+ and otherwise underserved populations throughout the State of New Jersey, particularly in her 29<sup>th</sup> district. Her seismic contributions in the areas of women's equality, housing and child advocacy made her a role model for many who came after her, among them Senators Nia Gill, M. Teresa Ruiz, Loretta Weinberg, the late Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver and many others in and out of politics. She fought for equitable pension for women, family empowerment and ushered in the Domestic Violence Act of 1981 and the Fair Housing Act of 1985. She also fought against employment discrimination, sexual assault, gender inequality and antiquated marriage laws.



### The Late Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver (1952 - 2023) East Orange, NJ

This program is dedicated to the late Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver. Her unexpected death on August 1, 2023 was a great loss to the State of New Jersey in which she held the highest elected position of any African American woman in the history of the state. Her loss has dealt a severe blow to her hometown of Newark, her city of residence East Orange, the state and to The Wynona Lipman Project which, in February 2023, she wholeheartedly endorsed.



### April D. Ryan

Washington, DC Bureau Chief for *The Griot* April D. Ryan, whose most recent book is *Black Women Will Save the World: An Anthem*, is an acclaimed journalist and award-winning author with over 25 years of experience as a White House Press Correspondent and political analyst. With a groundbreaking career spanning five presidential administrations, coupled with her valuable perspective as the only African-American female reporter from the White House, she is a trailblazer with a unique lens to shed light on the political careers of women like Senator Lipman. Ms. Ryan has served on the Board of the White House Correspondents Association and has been recognized as a Freedom of the Press Award winner, among her many honors. She was the Senator Wynona Lipman Chairholder (2017-2018) at the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University – New Brunswick, NJ.



# Wynona Lipman Centennial Celebration

## PROGRAMME

### 1:00 – 5:00 PM @ New Jersey Historical Society

Exhibit Opening

*Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story*

(On view throughout the afternoon)

### 2:00 – 5:00 PM @ Nico Kitchen + Bar

2:00 - 2:45 PM

Meet & Greet, Dessert Bar and Photo Op

### 3:00 – 3:30 PM

Welcome

Celeste A. Bateman, Founder, The Wynona Lipman Project

Tribute to Lt. Gov. Sheila Y. Oliver

Terry Swanson Tucker, Former Chief-of-Staff

Mistress of Ceremonies

Assemblywoman Shanique Speight

Remarks

Senator M. Teresa Ruiz

Gale Britton, Board President, Wynona's House

Reflections

Senator Nia Gill

### 3:30 PM

Guest Speaker

April D. Ryan, Author

*Black Women Will Save the World: An Anthem*



Photos by Glen Frieson

## Funding for The Wynona Lipman Project



Made possible by funds from the Essex County Division of Arts, Cultural and Historic Affairs, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

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Sincere appreciation and thanks to Sandra DeGeneste (Wynona Lipman's niece) and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center for providing *additional* support for this program.

Additional support provided by NewarkArts (ArtStart 2023), the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the Puffin Foundation, Ltd. the Office of Newark South Ward Councilman Patrick O. Council and individual donors.



Supporters can contribute to the Wynona Lipman documentary and future educational programming via our GoFundMe. (Scan QR code)



## About the Documentary

*Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story* (the documentary) combines oral histories, historic photographs, narration and music to form a rich tapestry that tells the story of this groundbreaking lawmaker known to many as "The Steel Magnolia." *Stronger Than Steel* explores Senator Lipman's life and her remarkable achievements, highlighting legislative initiatives and career benchmarks. Fifteen interviews examine the times in which she lived and how she navigated the 'slings and arrows' of gender and racial discrimination. The film examines her legacy and provides historic context from which other women, students and political aspirants can learn as they pursue political and social justice careers. We interviewed 15 people for the documentary, among them Sen. Nia Gill, Sen. Loretta Weinstein (ret), former Sen. Sharpe James (ret) who succeeded Sen. Lipman, Sen. M. Teresa Ruiz who currently holds the seat, Assemblyman Thomas Giblin, Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, Jr., former legislative aides Christy Davis Jackson, Esq., Vickie Donaldson, Esq. and Catherine Willis, former administrative assistant Della Moses Walker, former President of Essex County College Dr. Zachary Yamba, colleague and child advocate Rebecca Doggett (ret), Dominic Prophete, J.D., CEO of Wynona's House (An Essex County Child Advocacy Agency), daughter Karen Lipman and niece Sandra DeGeneste. We re-enacted the infamous "bathroom scene" which featured Sheila Harper as Wynona Lipman. We also filmed the press conference and groundbreaking of the Wynona Lipman Family Courthouse on May 18, 2023. The Courthouse (slated to open in 2025) is being built by the County of Essex in downtown Newark to better serve traumatized families. From this event, we created an 11-minute video available on YouTube.

## About the Exhibit

*Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story* (the exhibit), curated by Mansa K. Mussa, in collaboration with the New Jersey Historical Society, brings Senator Lipman's world to vivid life in this remarkable exhibit. "Our vision is to present an in-depth examination of the impact Senator Lipman had on the State of New Jersey in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, and it's a show that people will remember and cherish for years to come," he stated. "We know that her influence on several decades of African-American female legislators carried far beyond the halls of the legislature." The New Jersey Historical Society's state-of-the-art archival collections and resources are accessible to all, and this exhibit will inform and inspire attendees about the greater context in which Senator Lipman worked on behalf of our communities.

## About Blue Butterfly Arts & Media

The mission of Blue Butterfly Arts & Media (A NJ Nonprofit Corporation) founded by Celeste A. Bateman in 2022, is to create, present, advocate for and promote visual, performing, media arts and history programs and to provide creative opportunities for artists working in these genres. Ms. Bateman is a longtime arts advocate, licensed booking agent and former arts administrator. Her first documentary *Gone Too Soon: The Life, Legacy and Loss of Newark's Cultural Icons* has received local and international recognition.

## About the New Jersey Historical Society

The New Jersey Historical Society was founded in 1845 and is the oldest cultural institution in the state and the largest private repository for New Jersey material in the world. We have an award winning Museum, a world renowned Research Library, and a comprehensive Education Center for all ages. Visit them at [www.jerseyhistory.org](http://www.jerseyhistory.org).

**Museum Hours** Tuesday – Saturday - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

**Library Hours** Tuesday – Saturday - 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm (by appointment)

## About Wynona's House

Twenty years ago, the Senator Wynona Lipman Child Advocacy Center (known as Wynona's House) was founded in Newark, New Jersey as a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to helping children who have been abused or neglected. We are a collaboration of more than 70 multi-disciplinary advocates helping the children of Essex County. Wynona's House leverages public and private resources to improve outcomes addressing the problem of child abuse, neglect and maltreatment within the 22 municipalities of Essex County. The multi-agency collaboration serves 789,565 county residents and provides direct services to more than 600 abused or neglected children each year.

## Film Crew & Program Staff

Celeste A. Bateman, Producer/Director; Felicia A. Bateman, Talent Coordinator; Sophie Cipolla, Publicist; Pat Faison, Administrative Production Assistant; Carter "Roc" Mangan, Jr., Director of Music / Sound Engineer; Jamil A.C. Mangan, Assistant Director; Mansa K. Mussa, Curator; Danielle Rogers, Director of Photography / Film Editor; Adam B. Smith, Lighting Consultant

## Special Thanks To

Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; CSE Talent, LLC; Sandra DeGeneste, Wynona Lipman's niece; Glen Frieson, Photographer; Kean University; Barbara J. Kukla, Author, *Defying the Odds: Triumphant Black Women of Newark*; Karen Lipman, Wynona Lipman's daughter; Montclair Public Library; April D. Ryan, Author/Journalist; John Schreiber, CEO, New Jersey Performing Arts Center; Source of Knowledge Bookstore; Assemblywoman Shanique Speight, 29<sup>th</sup> Legislative District; Steven Tettamanti, New Jersey Historical Society; The Montclair Times Newspaper Archives; The Newark Museum of Art; The Newark Public Library; Wynona's House